ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

TALES DESIGNED TO CARRY AN...

IMPACT

2.50
4.00
CANADA

NO. 4
JULY

THE LONELY ONE

THE LAST ACT OF YOUR LITTLE COMEDY REALLY BEGINS A FEW WEEKS BEFORE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENS. YOU LIE IN A SHELL CRATER ON A BARE KOREAN HILLSIDE WITH THE WIND BITING AT YOUR CRACKED, BEARDED FACE. YOU'RE HUNGRY, HALF-FROZEN, AND YOUR MISERY MAKES YOUR VOICE EVEN MORE VICIOUS THAN IT USUALLY IS WHEN YOU TURN TO SPEAK TO MILLER...

OKAY! YOU HEARD THE MAN. LET'S GO, MILLER! I'M CURIOUS. MAYBE YOU'LL STOP ONE. I'VE BEEN WONDERING IF YOUR KIND *BLEEDS* YELLOW, TOO!

JACK DAVIS

UP ABOVE, THERE'S A MACHINE GUN PINNING THE OUTFIT DOWN. THE STAFF HAS JUST HANDED YOU THE CHORE OF KNOCKING IT OFF. AND YOU'VE GOT *HIM* FOR A PARTNER, *MILLER*...

WELL? ARE YOU *COMING*? OR DO I *DRAG* YOU?

I'M COMING...

MILLER IS SHAKING... AND NOT FROM THE COLD. BUT WHEN YOU TAKE OFF, HE FOLLOWS. AND, MISERABLE AS YOU ARE, YOU CAN ENJOY HIS FEAR...

SURE, YOU CAN ENJOY IT. BECAUSE IT PROVES AGAIN HOW RIGHT YOU ARE ABOUT HIS... HIS KIND. THEY'RE ALL YELLOW. THEY'RE SMART...SURE. BUT SO ARE RATS...

THERE THEY ARE! THEY HAVEN'T SPOTTED US! WE'LL GIVE 'EM A COUPLE OF GRENADES. THAT IS, IF YOU DON'T FOLD UP BEFORE WE GET 'EM OFF!

MILLER HAS A SPECIAL FEAR OF GRENADES. YOU'VE SEEN HOW HE HANDLES THEM. NERVOUSLY. BUT HE MANAGES...

WHOMP

YOU TAKE THE ENEMY NEST. YOU... AND HIM! VAGUELY, AS YOU FIGHT, YOU KNOW HE'S THERE. YOU'RE EVEN DISAPPOINTED. YOU'D LIKE IT BETTER IF HE'D CRACKED. BUT YOU GET YOUR WISH AFTERWARD... IN A WAY...

THE REST OF YOUR OUTFIT POUNDS UP THE SLOPE. THERE IS RETURN FIRE FROM UP ABOVE. THE STAFF SHOUTS AS HE RUNS BY...

ALL RIGHT, BENSON...MILLER! LET'S GO...

THE STAFF SHUDDERS AS A BULLET WHINES. YOU WATCH HIM PITCH FORWARD...

IT'S IRONIC, ISN'T IT, BENSON? A GOOD MAN LIKE THE STAFF TAKES ONE DEAD-CENTER... AND MILLER GOES ON LIVING. YOU LOSE HIM THEN. YOU HEAD AFTER THE OTHERS. BUT, HE'S AROUND LATER, AFTER THE OUTFIT TAKES THE HILL...

HE SITS ALONE, EATING HIS C-RATIONS. THAT'S YOUR DOING. NONE OF THE OTHERS GO NEAR HIM. HE DOESN'T BELONG. YOU CAN ALMOST SMILE. YOU'D SHOW HIM THAT... NOT FIVE MINUTES AFTER HE JOINED THE OUTFIT...

MILLER, EH? WELL, WELL, WELL! HEY, *GUYS! LOOK WHAT JUST BLEW IN!* ITS NAME IS *MILLER!*

YOU DON'T LIKE THE NAME, MISTER?

LIKE IT? I *LOVE* IT! I JUST DON'T HAPPEN TO LIKE WHAT IT *STANDS* FOR! SO *WHAT?!*

NOTHING! I'VE MET YOUR KIND BEFORE!

MY KIND! MY FOLKS ARE *AMERICANS! BORN HERE!* WHAT RAT-HOLE IN EUROPE DID *YOURS* CRAWL OUT OF?

GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!

MAKE ME!

WHAT A LAUGH THAT HAD BEEN. POOR MILLER. HE'D HAD TO SWING. BUT HE'D BEEN WHITE... TREMBLING...

AND YOU'D CAUGHT HIM LOW IN THE STOMACH. HE'D DOUBLED UP...

YOU'D BEATEN HIM TO A PULP... AND YOU'D ENJOYED IT. ALL YOUR HATRED AND CONTEMPT FOR HIS KIND HAD BEEN IN EVERY BLOW...

ALL RIGHT! THAT'S *ENOUGH*, BENSON! WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? *KILL* HIM?

MAYBE IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA! THEN THERE'D BE *ONE LESS* CONTAMINATING THE WORLD!

THE OTHERS HAD STOPPED YOU, FINALLY. THEY'D EVEN PATCHED MILLER UP. BUT THAT WAS BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ABOUT HIS KIND LIKE YOU DID. SO YOU'D SHOWN THEM...

HEY, MILLER! WHERE DO *YOU* FIGURE TO SPEND SUNDAY MORNING?

SUNDAY SERVICE 8:30 AM

YOU'D CUT MILLER OUT...ISOLATED HIM. BY THE TIME THE OUTFIT HAD SAILED FOR OVERSEAS DUTY, HE'D WITHDRAWN INTO A SHELL. BUT YOU NEVER LET UP...

YOU! FIND SOME *OTHER* PLACE TO BUNK. *I'M* TAKING THIS ONE, AND I WANT YOU AS FAR AWAY AS POSSIBLE! *UNDERSTAND?*

YOU'D NEEDLED MILLER CONSTANTLY. BUT HE'D NEVER FOUGHT BACK AFTER THAT FIRST DAY. NOT HIM! HE'D NEVER EVEN SPOKEN TO YOU DIRECTLY AGAIN UNTIL THE OUTFIT HIT KOREA...

COME ON! COME ON! *MOVE!* HOW MUCH ROOM DO YOU NEED?

WOULD IT MATTER...TO YOU? THE WAY I SEE IT, THERE ISN'T ROOM FOR ME *ANYWHERE* AS FAR AS *YOU'RE* CONCERNED!

BENSON, I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOMETHING. *WHY* DO YOU HATE ME? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO *PROVE?*

WHY? BECAUSE I FIGURE TO SHOW YOU UP FOR WHAT YOU *ARE!* TO SHOW THAT I'M A *BETTER MAN* THAN YOU...YOU OR ANY OF YOUR KIND...

BUT *WHY?* YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED THAT! *WHY* DO YOU HATE *ME?* HOW HAVE *I* HURT *YOU?*

YOU CAN'T HURT *ME!* YOU NEVER *WILL!* BECAUSE I *KNOW* YOU! I DON'T *NEED* ANY REASONS TO...

ENEMY PLANES! TAKE COVER!

THE FLIGHT OF THREE MIGS HAD ENDED THE CONVERSATION FOR THE MOMENT, HOWLING OVER THE CONVOY, SENDING ROCKETS AND STEEL DOWN AT THE MEN DIVING FOR COVER...

YOU'D HIT THE DITCH WITH MILLER AND YOU'D LAUGHED AT HIS TERROR...

SEE WHAT I *MEAN* ABOUT YOUR KIND AND MINE? WHAT'S THE *MATTER*, MILLER? *SCARED?* WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN WE GET INTO *COMBAT?*

MILLER HADN'T ANSWERED BUT YOU'D SEEN HIS FACE... AND YOU'D KNOWN YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT HIM. IN THE WEEKS AFTER THAT, YOU'D SEEN THAT EXPRESSION IN HIS FACE SO OFTEN...

LOOK AT MILLER! IF HE WAS MORE SCARED, HE'D FALL OVER!

SO WOULD I! WHY DON'T YOU SHUT UP, BENSON! OKAY, HE'S SCARED! *WHO ISN'T?* HE *DOES* HIS JOB! WE *ALL* CAN'T HAVE CAST IRON NERVES LIKE *YOU!*

YEAH, YOU'VE BEEN RIGHT ABOUT MILLER. BUT, SOMEHOW, HE'S MADE IT THIS FAR. BUT IT WON'T BE LONG. YOU LOOK ACROSS TO HIM... ALONE... EATING HIS C-RATIONS. AND A VOICE SNAPS YOU OUT OF YOUR REVERIE...

BENSON! THE MEDICS JUST PICKED UP THE STAFF! FROM HERE ON IN, YOU'RE PLATOON SERGEANT!

ME? Y-YES, SIR!

YOU AND MILLER JUST LOOK INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES. YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY A WORD. HE KNOWS WHAT TO EXPECT FROM NOW ON. AND YOU DON'T DISAPPOINT HIM...

YOU RIDE HIM HARD! YOU PICK HIM FOR EVERY DIRTY JOB... EVERY EXTRA DETAIL. BUT THE END OF YOUR LITTLE COMEDY DOESN'T COME UNTIL A MONTH LATER... BACK IN A REST AREA...

HEY, MILLER! THE LIEUTENANT WANTS TO SEE YOU! LOOKS LIKE HE'S GIVING YOU A PAIR OF *STRIPES!* *CORPORAL!*

HIM...WEARING STRIPES!? ALL OF A SUDDEN THE HATE INSIDE YOU IS A BONFIRE...BURNING WHITE HOT, NON-COMS DON'T DRAW DETAIL! MILLER WILL BE OFF THE HOOK! YOU'RE ANGRY...AND YOU MAKE YOUR PLANS...

GRENADES
ANTI-PERSONNEL
M2-PRACTICE TYPE

YOU COME UP WITH AN IDEA. YOU PICK UP A PRACTICE GRENADE AT THE SUPPLY TENT. A DUMMY. THEN YOU ROUND UP SOME OF THE GUYS...

I DON'T *KNOW*, SARGE! IT SEEMS LIKE A *DIRTY TRICK!* YOU KNOW HOW *SCARED* HE IS OF GRENADES!

GRENADES... AND *ANYTHING ELSE* THAT MIGHT HURT THAT YELLOW HIDE OF HIS! *GET WISE!*

TODAY, HE'S A *CORPORAL!* TOMORROW...MAYBE HE'S A *SERGEANT!* BECAUSE THE OLD MAN DOESN'T *KNOW* HIM LIKE WE DO! HE'S *YELLOW*...*CLEAN THROUGH*... LIKE ALL HIS KIND...

I FIGURE TO *SHOW HIM UP*...ONCE AND FOR ALL... BEFORE HE *MAKES* SERGEANT AND *FOLDS UP* IN A TIGHT SPOT! BECAUSE WHEN *THAT* HAPPENS, SOMEBODY'S GOING TO GET KILLED, AND I DON'T FIGURE ON IT BEING *ME!*

THAT ISN'T *REALLY* WHY YOU'RE DOING THIS, IS IT BENSON? YOU JUST *HATE* MILLER FOR BEING WHAT HE IS! BUT YOU MAKE IT SOUND GOOD...AND THE OTHERS GO ALONG...

THERE HE IS...AND THERE'S THE OLD MAN ACROSS THE ROAD! OKAY! NOW'S OUR CHANCE! HERE WE GO!

HEY! MILLER! COME OVER HERE A MINUTE! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU!

YOU WAIT AS HE APPROACHES. THEN YOU PULL THE PIN... FUMBLE...AND DROP THE PRACTICE GRENADE...

LOOK OUT! I ACCIDENTALLY PULLED THE PIN ON THAT THING! LIVE GRENADE! HIT THE DIRT!

IT'S THE END OF YOUR COMEDY, BENSON. THE FINAL ACT. YOU TURN, CHOKING BACK A LAUGH, AND YOU HIT THE DIRT...

THE WAY YOU FIGURE, MILLER WILL RUN. AND WHEN YOU AND THE OTHERS START LAUGHING, THE OLD MAN WILL GET THE PICTURE...

SURE, A MAN HITS THE DIRT WHEN A LIVE GRENADE DROPS. BUT A COMMANDING OFFICER DOESN'T PROMOTE A MAN WHO RUNS SCARED... A MAN THAT THE OTHER MEN CAN MAKE A FOOL OF. HE MIGHT EVEN BREAK THAT MAN...

YEAH, IT WORKS LIKE A CHARM! ONLY THE MEN DON'T PLAY IT UP! YOU LOOK AROUND AT THEM, BENSON. YOUR BUDDIES STANDING WITH GRIM SILENT FACES. NOBODY'S LAUGHING. THAT'S WHEN YOU TURN. AND SUDDENLY, YOU'RE SICK...WAY DOWN DEEP...INSIDE...

YOU GET TO YOUR FEET...

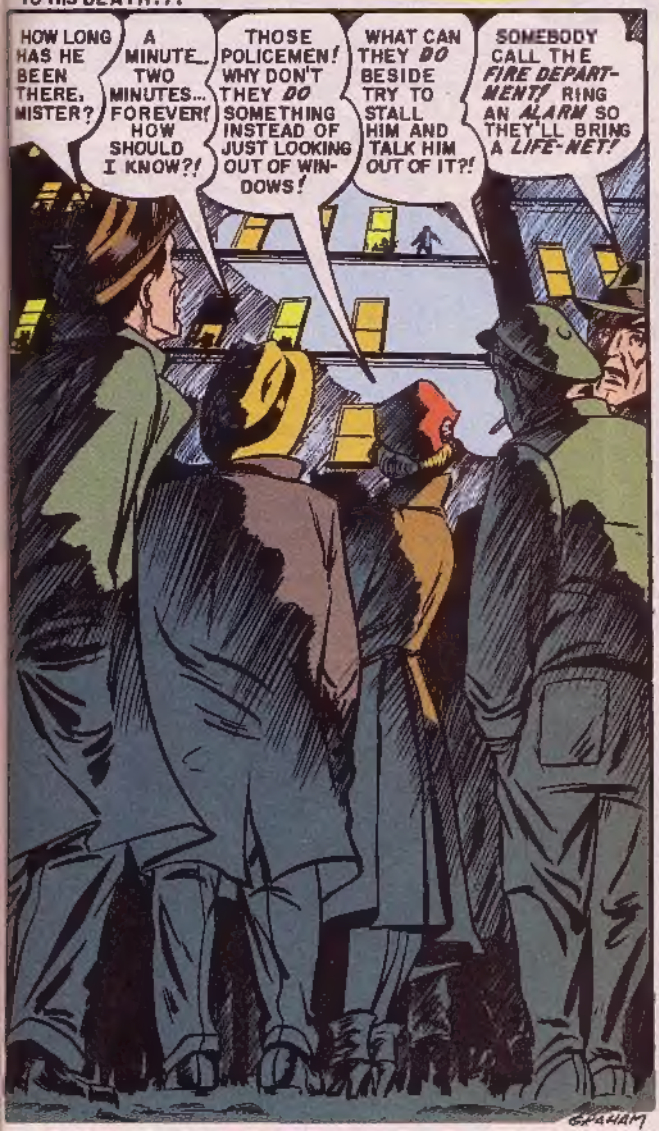
WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT? HE'S YELLOW.. *CLEAR THROUGH!* THE GRENADE'S A *DUD*... A *DUMMY!*
YEAH! *WE* KNOW! BUT *HE DIDN'T KNOW IT! DID HE, BENSON?*

YOU TRY TO THINK OF SOMETHING TO SAY...TO GET THE OTHERS BACK ON YOUR SIDE. BUT IT'S NO USE...

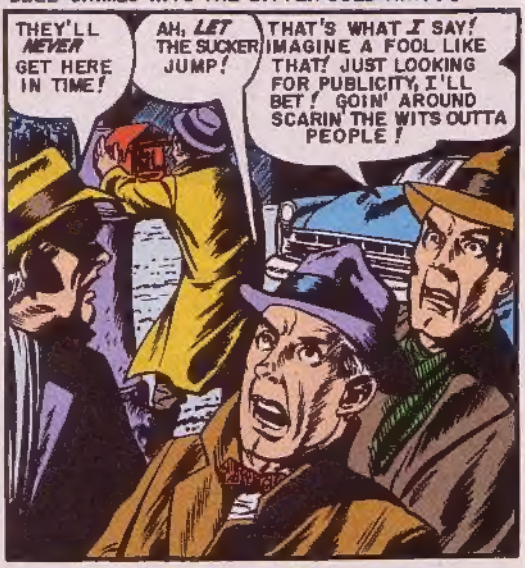
ALL YOU CAN DO WHEN THEY MOVE OFF WITH MILLER IS TO STAND THERE, FEELING SMALL. ALL YOU CAN DO, BENSON, IS TO START GETTING USED TO WHAT YOU TAUGHT MILLER SO WELL! HOW IT FEELS TO BE THE LONELY ONE!

FALL in WINTER

IT IS BITTER COLD AFTER THE SNOW... THE FIRST SIZEABLE STORM OF THIS WINTER SEASON. THE PEOPLE CRUSH TOGETHER ACROSS FROM THE *FREMONT BUILDING*, GATHERING WARMTH FROM EACH OTHER'S BODIES, YET SHIVERING STILL... NOT FROM THE COLD, BUT FROM HORROR... HORROR FOR THE LONELY FIGURE ON THE SNOW-ENCRUSTED LEDGE TEN STORIES ABOVE THE CITY'S SIDEWALK... WANTING TO RUN FROM THE FRIGHTENING SIGHT THEY MAY AT ANY MOMENT BEHOLD, YET HELD FAST BY THE TENSE DRAMA... MANY PRAYING ALOUD FOR HIS RESCUE, WHILE SECRETLY, AND WITH SHAME, HOPING NOT TO BE DEPRIVED OF THE THRILL OF SEEING SOMEONE LEAP TO HIS DEATH...


HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN THERE, MISTER?
A MINUTE... TWO MINUTES... FOREVER! HOW SHOULD I KNOW?!
THOSE POLICEMEN! WHY DON'T THEY *DO* SOMETHING INSTEAD OF JUST LOOKING OUT OF WINDOWS!
WHAT CAN THEY *DO* BESIDE TRY TO STALL HIM AND TALK HIM OUT OF IT?!
SOMEBODY CALL THE *FIRE DEPARTMENT!* RING AN *ALARM* SO THEY'LL BRING A *LIFE-NET!*
GRAHAM

AN ONLOOKER SCURRIES TO AN ALARM BOX... PULLS DOWN THE HANDLE. THE SHRILL CLANGING BELL CHIMES INTO THE BITTER COLD AIR...

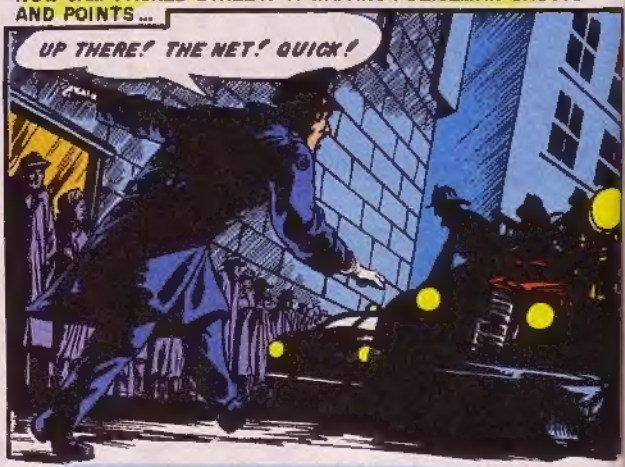

THEY'LL *NEVER* GET HERE IN TIME!
AH, *LET* THE SUCKER JUMP!
THAT'S WHAT *I* SAY! IMAGINE A FOOL LIKE THAT! JUST LOOKING FOR PUBLICITY, I'LL BET! GOIN' AROUND SCARIN' THE WITS OUTTA PEOPLE!

ON THAT SLIPPERY LEDGE A HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE STREET, THE BENUMBED MAN CLINGS TO HIS PRECARIOUS PERCH, UNABLE... OR UNWILLING TO MOVE OR ANSWER THE PLEADING OFFICERS...

WHAT'S YOUR *NAME*, MISTER? YOU *MARRIED*? *KIDS*, MAYBE? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO THIS TO *THEM*, ARE YOU?
COME ON IN, MISTER! WE'VE GOT *HOT COFFEE!* YOU'D *LIKE* SOME HOT COFFEE RIGHT NOW, *WOULDN'T* YOU? C'MON...

NOW, FAINTLY, ABOVE THE ANXIOUS MURMUR OF THE CROWD, THE SCREAM OF SIRENS ECHO...ANNOUNCING THE RAPID APPROACH OF SEVERAL FIRE-ENGINES...

THE ENGINES WAIL THEIR WAY THROUGH MID-TOWN TRAFFIC, AND AFTER ONE UNENDING LONG MINUTE, THE FIRST GREAT RED MONSTER OF MERCY NOSES ITS NOISY WAY INTO THE NOW JAM-PACKED STREET. A WAITING POLICEMAN SHOUTS AND POINTS...

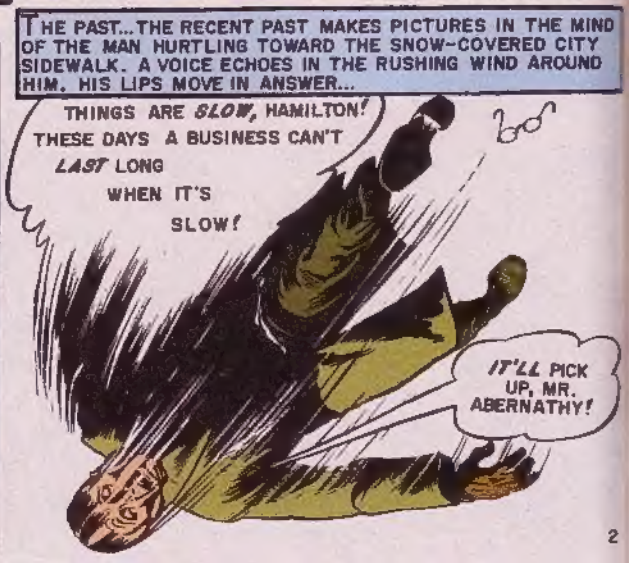


THE FIRE-EATERS SIZE UP THE SITUATION AT A GLANCE...SNATCH THEIR LIFE-NET...AND BATTLE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE RELUCTANTLY YIELDING CROWD...

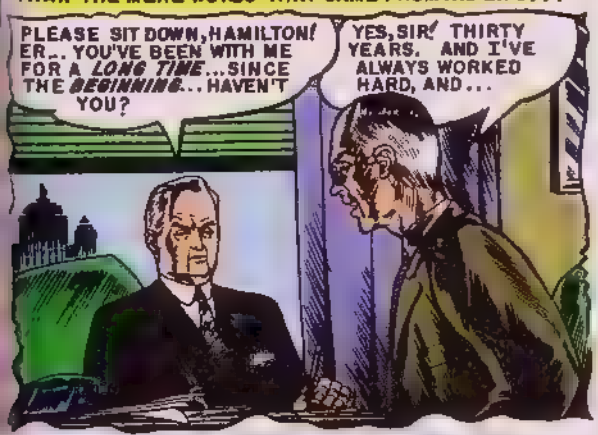
ON THE LEDGE, THE MAN, COAXED ONWARD BY EAGER OFFICERS, CAUTIOUSLY INCHES HIS WAY TOWARD A WINDOW...

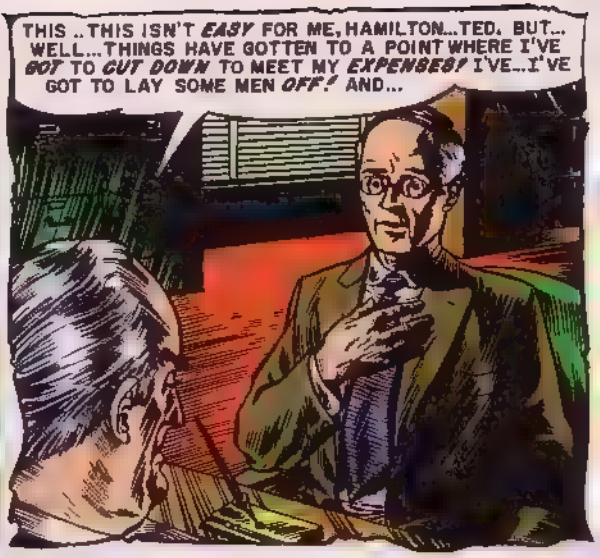
SUDDENLY, THE UPTURNED FACES BLANCHE WHITE...

THE PAST...THE RECENT PAST MAKES PICTURES IN THE MIND OF THE MAN HURTLING TOWARD THE SNOW-COVERED CITY SIDEWALK. A VOICE ECHOES IN THE RUSHING WIND AROUND HIM. HIS LIPS MOVE IN ANSWER...

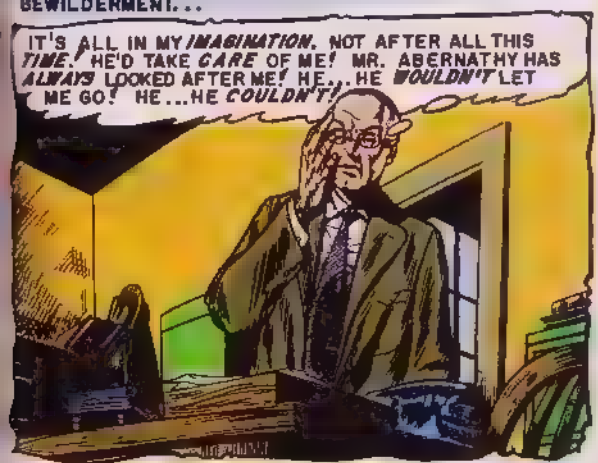


HE CAN SEE, AS IF IT WERE JUST HAPPENING, THE STRAINED LOOK ON HIS EMPLOYER'S FACE. AND IN SPLIT-SECONDS, THEODORE HAMILTON ONCE AGAIN RELIVES THE RECENT PAST... FEELING THAT MR. ABERNATHY WAS STRIVING TO SAY SOMETHING MORE THAN THE MERE WORDS THAT CAME FROM HIS LIPS...

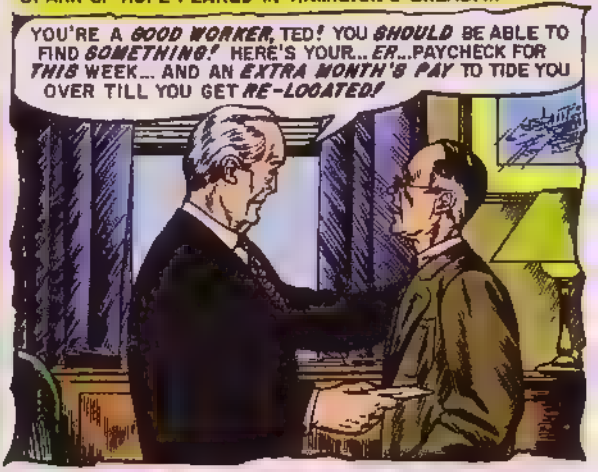

PLEASE SIT DOWN, HAMILTON! ER... YOU'VE BEEN WITH ME FOR A *LONG TIME*... SINCE THE *BEGINNING*... HAVEN'T YOU?
YES, SIR! THIRTY YEARS. AND I'VE ALWAYS WORKED HARD, AND...


THIS .. THIS ISN'T *EASY* FOR ME, HAMILTON... TED. BUT... WELL... THINGS HAVE GOTTEN TO A POINT WHERE I'VE *GOT* TO *CUT DOWN* TO MEET MY *EXPENSES!* I'VE... I'VE GOT TO LAY SOME MEN *OFF!* AND...

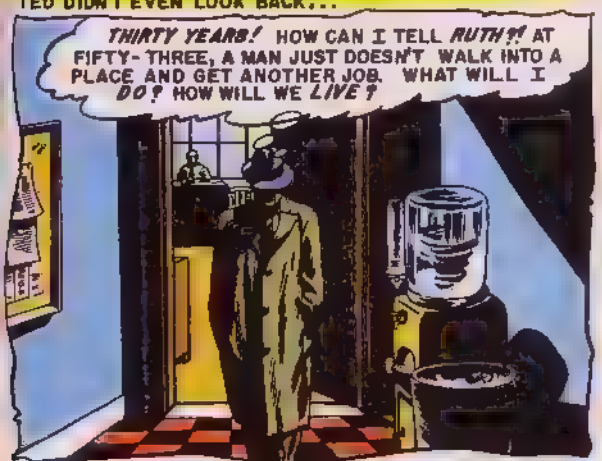
THEODORE HAMILTON STUMBLED BACK TO THE DESK WHERE HE'D SAT FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS. SOMEHOW, SUDDENLY, IT LOOKED UNFAMILIAR TO HIM... AN UNRECOGNIZED OBJECT FLOATING IN A CLOUDY SEA OF BEWILDERMENT...


IT'S ALL IN MY *IMAGINATION*. NOT AFTER ALL THIS *TIME!* HE'D TAKE *CARE* OF ME! MR. ABERNATHY HAS *ALWAYS* LOOKED AFTER ME! HE... HE *WOULDN'T* LET ME GO! HE... HE *COULDN'T!*

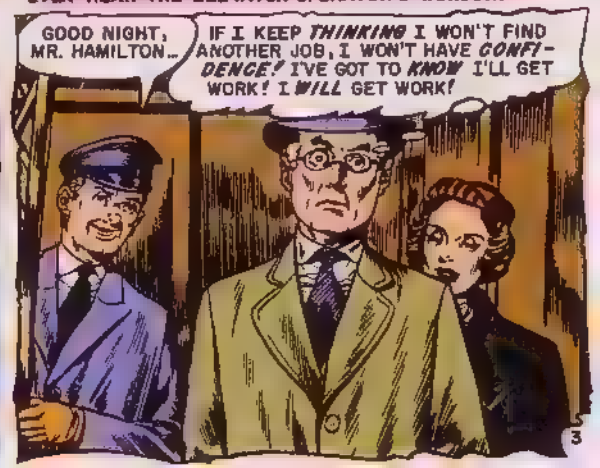
TILL FOUR-THIRTY, HAMILTON WENT THROUGH THE NUMB MOTIONS OF WORKING. THEN, MR. ABERNATHY CALLED HIM BACK INTO HIS OFFICE. A FAINT, FUTILE SPARK OF HOPE FLARED IN HAMILTON'S BREAST...


YOU'RE A *GOOD WORKER*, TED! YOU *SHOULD* BE ABLE TO FIND *SOMETHING!* HERE'S YOUR... *ER*... PAYCHECK FOR *THIS* WEEK... AND AN *EXTRA MONTH'S PAY* TO TIDE YOU OVER TILL YOU GET *RE-LOCATED!*

OUT OF HABIT, TED PUT HIS DESK IN ORDER. THEN HE LEFT QUIETLY, WITH NO GOODBYES. THOUGH THE OTHERS KNEW, THEY SAID NOTHING, FEARING FOR THEIR OWN JOBS. TED DIDN'T EVEN LOOK BACK...


THIRTY YEARS! HOW CAN I TELL *RUTH?!* AT FIFTY-THREE, A MAN JUST DOESN'T WALK INTO A PLACE AND GET ANOTHER JOB. WHAT WILL I *DO?* HOW WILL WE *LIVE?*

HE ELEVATORED DOWN WITHOUT KNOWING OR FEELING WHERE HE WAS. HIS WAS THE SENSATION OF UNAWARENESS... OF FLOATING NUMBLY IN A VACUUM. HE DIDN'T EVEN HEAR THE ELEVATOR OPERATOR'S WORDS...


GOOD NIGHT, MR. HAMILTON...
IF I KEEP *THINKING* I WON'T FIND ANOTHER JOB, I WON'T HAVE *CONFIDENCE!* I'VE GOT TO *KNOW* I'LL GET WORK! I *WILL* GET WORK!

HE TOOK HIS PLACE WITH SOME DOZEN OTHERS AT THE BUS STOP, AND WHEN THE BUS ARRIVED AT THE BUSY CORNER, HE STARTED ABOARD, NOT EVEN LOOKING TO SEE IF IT WAS HIS BUS...

...BUT *RUTH...SHE WON'T* BE CONFIDENT! SHE ALWAYS THINKS I'M A *FOOL* IF I *DON'T* WORRY

THERE WAS A WOMAN IN FRONT OF HIM...A PUSHY WOMAN. IN HER EAGERNESS TO BOARD, SHE DROPPED THE PURSE SHE'D HELD TUCKED UNDER HER ARM. HE QUICKLY STOOPED TO RETRIEVE IT FOR HER...

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! JUST TAKE IT EASY OUT THERE, LADY! THERE'S PLENTY OF ROOM IN THE REAR! GIVE 'EM A CHANCE TO MOVE BACK! SLOW DOWN, HUH!

THEY'RE QUICK ENOUGH TO TAKE YOUR MONEY!

THE WOMAN FELT FOR HER PURSE! THEN, IN THE THROES OF SUDDEN COLD ALARM, SHE WHIRLED ON HAMILTON! AND HE, CLUTCHING THE PURSE HE'D PICKED UP, RECOILED...

MY PURSE! HE GRABBED IT RIGHT FROM UNDER MY ARM!

NO, LADY! I...

SHE WAITED FOR NO EXPLANATION, BUT BEGAN TO SHRIEK SHRILLY...

PURSE SNATCHER! HELP! POLICE!

LADY, I...

OVERCOME BY EMBARRASSMENT, THE ACCUSED LOOKED AROUND. THE WOMAN KEPT SCREAMING, SO THAT HER VOICE COULD BE HEARD ABOVE THE DIN OF TRAFFIC. A NEARBY PATROLMAN HEARD, AND RAN TOWARD THEM...

SHE'S *RIGHT!* HE *DID* STEAL HER PURSE! *LOOK!* HE'S *STILL* GOT IT!

POLICE! POLICE!

WHEN HAMILTON SAW THE OFFICER COMING, HE PANICKED. HE TURNED AND RAN...

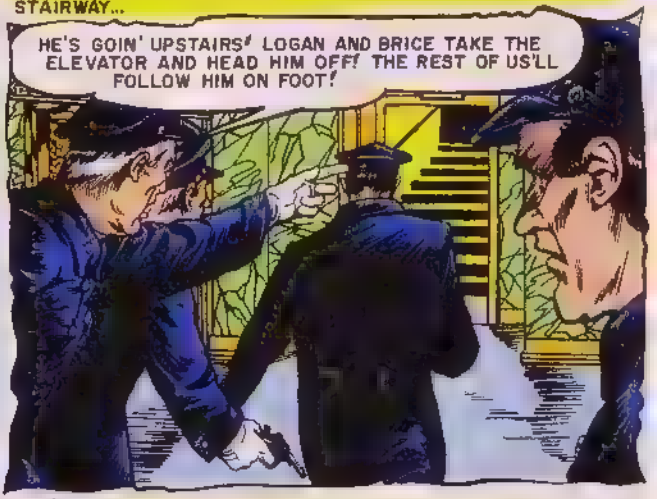
THERE HE GOES, OFFICER! *THAT'S* HIM! *HE STOLE HER PURSE!*

HEY! YOU...

HE RAN WILDLY, ROUNDING THE NEAREST CORNER, THE OFFICER FOLLOWING. SUDDENLY, HE REALIZED HE STILL HELD THE WOMAN'S PURSE. HE FLUNG IT INTO THE STREET...

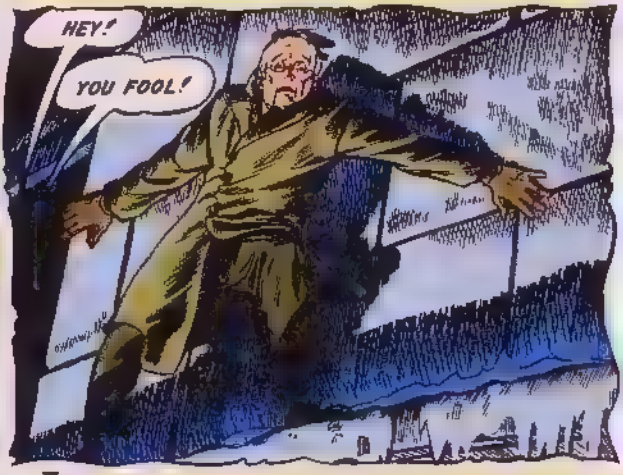
SOON, OTHER PATROLMEN JOINED IN THE CHASE. HE SAW A YAWNING BUILDING ENTRANCE.. AND DESPERATELY PLUNGED INTO IT...

THE PURSUING POLICEMEN SWARMED IN AFTER HIM, CATCHING A GLIMPSE OF HIM BEFORE HE VANISHED FROM SIGHT UP THE STAIRWAY...

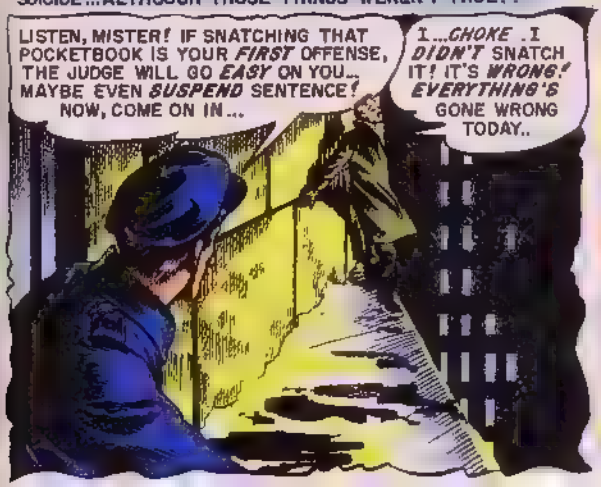


SOMEHOW, HE ELUDED THEM, DODGING IN AND OUT OF OFFICES, SNEAKING UP FLIGHTS OF BACK STAIRS, MINGLING WITH GROUPS WAITING FOR ELEVATORS. BUT IN THE HALLWAY OF THE TENTH FLOOR, THEY TRAPPED HIM ...CLOSING IN...

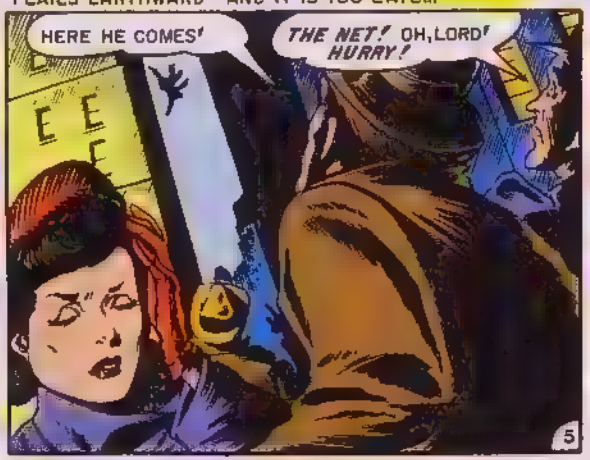
HIS HEART THUMPED. THE BLOOD POUNDED THROUGH HIS HEAD. HE LOOKED AROUND WILDLY AND SAW THE WINDOW JUST BEHIND HIM, AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY. HE TURNED AND FLUNG IT OPEN, CLIMBING OUT ONTO THE LEDGE..



...ONE HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE STREET. THE CROWD GATHERED AND TALKED ABOUT A MAN GONE MAD... AND SUICIDE...ALTHOUGH THOSE THINGS WEREN'T TRUE. .


LISTEN, MISTER! IF SNATCHING THAT POCKETBOOK IS YOUR FIRST OFFENSE, THE JUDGE WILL GO EASY ON YOU... MAYBE EVEN SUSPEND SENTENCE! NOW, COME ON IN...
I...CHOKE .I DIDN'T SNATCH IT! IT'S WRONG! EVERYTHING'S GONE WRONG TODAY..

THEN, WHEN TED HAMILTON BECAME MORE SCARED OF BEING ON THE LEDGE THAN HE WAS OF THE POLICE, HE TRIED TO BACK INSIDE. BUT HE SLIPPED. AND NOW HE FLAILS EARTHWARD AND IT IS TOO LATE...



SOME PEOPLE SCREAM. SOME ARE SICK. A FEW FAINT. BUT MOST OF THE CROWD, OBSESSED WITH MORBID CURIOSITY, SURGES FORWARD IN A WAVE TO VIEW THE BROKEN REMAINS .

BUT THE FIREMEN HAD MOVED SWIFTLY. THEY'D CAUGHT THEODORE HAMILTON IN THEIR LIFE-NET. HE SITS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LARGE WHITE CANVAS DISC ON THE SIDEWALK, DAZED AND FRIGHTENED, WHILE AN AMBULANCE DOCTOR LOOKS HIM OVER...

HE'S OKAY!

YOU'LL HAVE TO COME ALONG, MISTER!

BUT THEY NEVER ARREST TED HAMILTON. THERE IS A BUS DRIVER, WHO, WHAT WITH THE RED LIGHT AND THE CROWD, AND THE CARS JAMMING TRAFFIC, COULDN'T MOVE HIS BUS ANYHOW, SO HE'D COME OUT TO WATCH THE EXCITEMENT...

HEY! IT'S THAT *GUY!* LISTEN, OFFICER! IF YOU'RE MAKING A PINCH ON THAT *LOUD-MOUTHED DAME'S* SAY-SO, I SAW HER *DROP* THAT PURSE! ALL *THIS* POOR OLD BIRD DID WAS *PICK IT UP* FOR HER...

AND THERE IS ANOTHER MAN DELAYED BY THE CROWD. MR. KENNETH ABERNATHY... WHO RUSHES TO TED'S SIDE...

WHY, IT'S . IT'S *TED.* .*TED HAMILTON!*

TED...*CHOKE*... YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE *DONE* THAT! LISTEN, TED, YOU'VE *STILL GOT A JOB!* I'LL *KEEP* YOU ON...*SOMEHOW!* I'D *HATE* TO THINK *I* WAS RESPONSIBLE...

SO EVERYTHING IS FINE FOR THEODORE HAMILTON, AND THERE WON'T HAVE TO BE ANY EXPLANATIONS TO RUTH AFTER ALL. THE THRONG DISPERSES, GOING ITS SEVERAL WAYS, HAPPY WITH ITS THRILL, HAPPY WITH THE EXCITEMENT IT HAD SEEN, YET IGNORANT OF ITS MEANING...

DARNED IF I KNOW *WHY* HE JUMPED! *YOU* KNOW?

SURE! I *READ* ABOUT PSYCHOS LIKE HIM! *THAT'S* WHAT HE IS. A *PSYCHO!* THEY TAKE IT IN THEIR HEADS THEY GOT TO *JUMP*, AND BEFORE YOU *KNOW* IT...

THE END

The BITTER END

"LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON" IS AN APHORISM THAT USUALLY DESCRIBES MOST FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIPS. BUT, TO HIS CHAGRIN, IT DID NOT DESCRIBE GERARD BULLARD'S! BULLARD'S SON WAS A CRUEL, GNAWING DISAPPOINTMENT TO HIM. EVERYTHING BULLARD WAS, HIS SON WAS NOT. BUT GERARD BULLARD WAS NOT GOING TO ACCEPT THIS FATE. BULLARD WAS GOING TO FIGHT IT OUT TO THE BITTER END. BULLARD WOULD HAVE A SON IN HIS OWN IMAGE... A SON TO FOLLOW IN HIS IDENTICAL FOOTSTEPS... A SON TO CARRY ON HIS GOOD NAME! THE NAME THAT ALL BOSTON SOCIETY REVERED... *BULLARD!*

I DEMAND AN *EXPLANATION*, NICHOLAS! YOU'VE NOT BEEN HOME FOR DINNER FOR A *WEEK!* WHY ARE YOU *AVOIDING* ME?

I'M *NOT* AVOIDING YOU, FATHER! I'VE BEEN BUSY AT THE *LAB*...

THAT'S A *LIE!* A CONFOUNDED *LIE!* I *CHECKED* WITH THE LABORATORY! YOU HAVEN'T SPENT *ONE EVENING* THERE! CAN'T YOU TELL THE *TRUTH*?

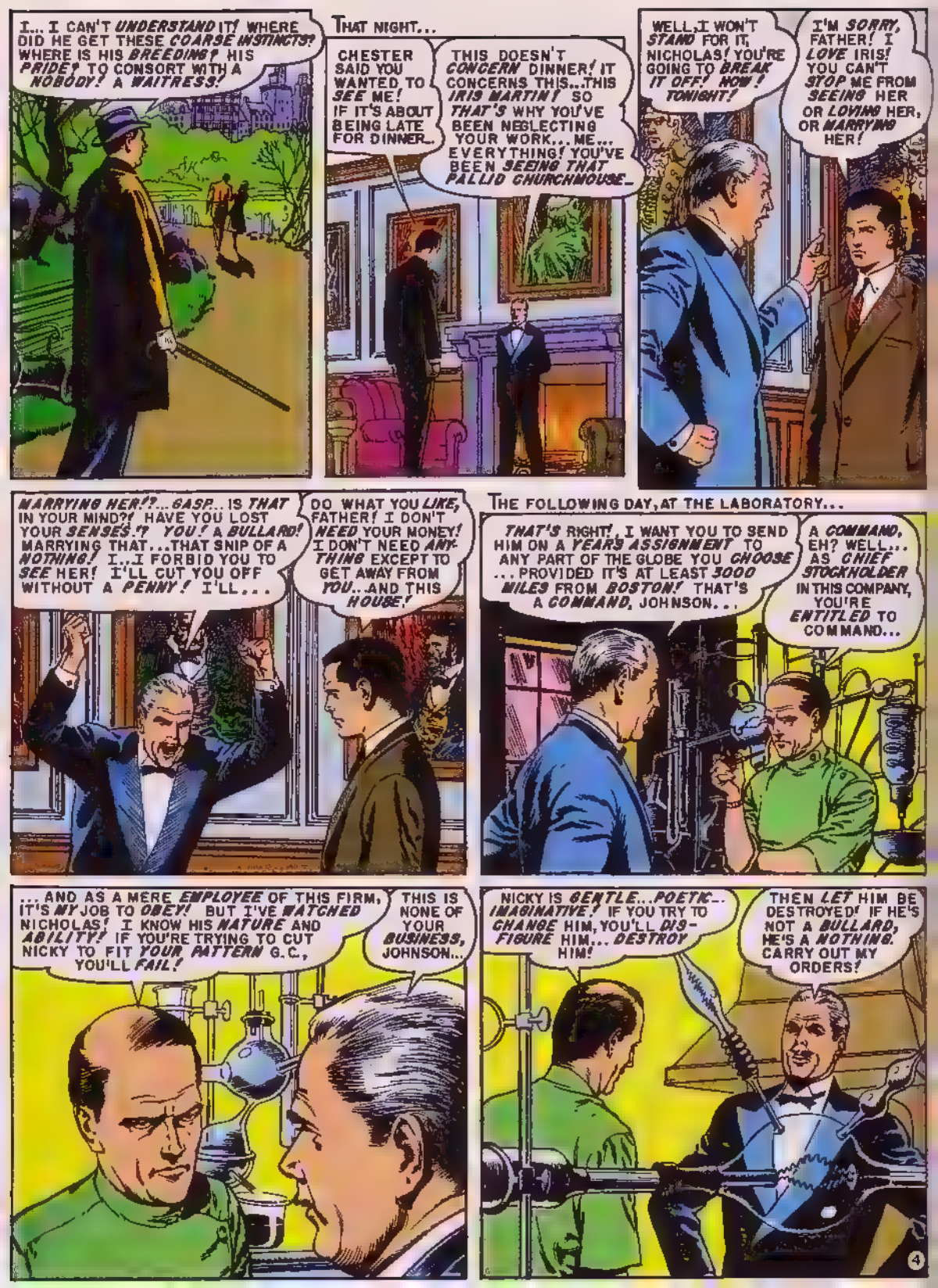
TO *YOU?!* WHATEVER I'D *TELL* YOU WOULD BE *MISUNDERSTOOD!*

YOU *FOOL!* IT'S *NOT* HARD TO UNDERSTAND *YOU*... *OR* YOUR IDEALS! YOU HAVEN'T *GOT* ANY! YOUR MIND IS FULL OF *NONSENSE*... *POETRY*... *FOOLISH DREAMS!* YOU'RE A *DISGRACE* TO THE *BULLARD NAME!*

YOU'RE *RIGHT*, SIR! MAY I *GO* NOW?

NO! YOU'RE GOING TO LISTEN TO ME! I'M NOT GOING TO LET THE TENACITY, PRIDE, AND GENIUS OF GENERATIONS OF BULLARDS TRICKLE INTO NOTHINGNESS!
BUT, FATHER! MY PERSONALITY IS DIFFERENT FROM YOURS... FROM THEIRS...
HANG YOUR PERSONALITY! YOUR PERSONALITY IS HANDED DOWN TO YOU! YOU INHERIT YOUR PERSONALITY WITH YOUR NAME! LOOK AT YOUR ANCESTORS! MERCHANT PRINCES, ALL OF THEM! FINANCIAL WIZARDS! GREAT SCHOLARS! MEN OF COURAGE AND VISION...
WELL, I'M NOT LIKE YOU OR THEM! WHY MUST I HAVE IDEALS I DISLIKE?! WHY MUST I FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GHOSTS!?
THEY'RE NOT GHOSTS! THEY LIVE ON... IN YOU... AND ME!
HAD YOUR MOTHER GIVEN ME TWO SONS, I'D FORGET ABOUT YOU! I'D WRITE YOU OFF AS STUPID AND HOPELESS! BUT SHE DIED BEARING YOU...
I KNOW! YOU'VE TOLD ME OFTEN ENOUGH! I'M THE LAST OF THE BULLARDS! I'VE GOT TO CARRY ON THE FAMILY TRADITION!
EXACTLY! YOU HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE! THE MORE YOU ACCEPT YOUR FATE AS THE LAST OF THE BULLARD NAME, THE LESS TYRANNICAL I WILL BE! STOP FIGHTING ME, NICHOLAS...
BUT I HAVEN'T YOUR MONEY-DRIVE! I HAVEN'T YOUR HEAD FOR BUSINESS! I HAVE NO FINANCIAL TALENTS!
I'LL HELP YOU GET THEM! I'LL GUIDE YOU! JUST PUT YOURSELF IN MY HANDS! NOW GET DRESSED... WE'RE INVITED TO THE COCHRANE'S TONIGHT! SHEILA COCHRANE HAS TAKEN QUITE A LIKING TO YOU..
YES, I KNOW
THAT NIGHT, IN THE SUMPTUOUS COCHRANE LIVING-ROOM...
THEY MAKE A LOVELY COUPLE. YOUR SON AND MY DAUGHTER! SHEILA THINKS THE WORLD OF NICKY!
AND VICE VERSA! AN ALLIANCE OF THE COCHRANES AND BULLARDS WOULD BE THE MOST BRILLIANT MERGER IN BOSTON SOCIETY! I DRINK TO THAT POSSIBILITY...
2

TWO HOURS LATER ..
YOU WEREN'T VERY ATTENTIVE TO SHEILA, NICHOLAS. THAT'S A MISTAKE! THE GIRL IS MAD ABOUT YOU! HER MADNESS COULD BRING YOU MILLIONS..
I DON'T WANT SHEILA... HER MADNESS... OR HER MILLIONS! LOOK, FATHER! IT'S JUST NO GOOD! I CAN'T THINK ALONG YOUR LINES!
BUT YOU MUST! MY LINES ARE CORRECT! I WANT NO MORE OF THIS SENTIMENTAL REASONING! YOU'RE THE HEIR OF A FORTUNE! UNDERSTAND THAT! YOU'RE STUCK WITH WHAT YOU ARE! DON'T WASTE TIME TRYING TO GET UN-STUCK!
BUT THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, AT DINNER TIME...
I CALLED THE LABORATORY, SIR! MASTER NICHOLAS WAS NOT IN ALL DAY! THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS!
WELL, HE ISN'T HERE! THAT'S WHAT CONCERNS ME! CLEAR AWAY HIS PLACE-SETTING!
AFTER ALL MY THREATS, HE'S DEFIED ME AGAIN! THAT IDIOT IS UP TO SOMETHING! I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS! I COULD HIRE A DETECTIVE! NO! I'LL FOLLOW HIM MYSELF.. TOMORROW!
THE FOLLOWING DAY, ON A BUSY BOSTON STREET...
CONFOUND THE YOUNG FOOL! WHAT'S HE DOING? HE'S BEEN PACING IN FRONT OF THAT RESTAURANT FOR AN HOUR! HE... WAIT! HE'S TURNING! HE'S GREETING SOMEONE! IT'S... IT'S A GIRL!
RESTAURANT
THEY'RE TALKING TOGETHER! IT WILL GIVE ME A CHANCE TO DUCK IN HERE AND FIND OUT WHO SHE IS!
WHO?! A SHORT BLONDE IN A GREEN COAT WHO JUST LEFT? WHY, YOU MUST MEAN IRIS . IRIS MARTIN! SHE WORKS HERE WAITS ON TABLES! ANYTHING WRONG?
A A WAITRESS! THAT FOOL! THAT.. THAT UTTER STUPID FOOL! ASSOCIATING WITH A COMMON WAITRESS!
3


I... I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! WHERE DID HE GET THESE COARSE INSTINCTS? WHERE IS HIS BREEDING? HIS PRIDE? TO CONSORT WITH A NOBODY! A WAITRESS!
THAT NIGHT...
CHESTER SAID YOU WANTED TO SEE ME! IF IT'S ABOUT BEING LATE FOR DINNER...
THIS DOESN'T CONCERN DINNER! IT CONCERNS THIS...THIS IRIS MARTIN! SO THAT'S WHY YOU'VE BEEN NEGLECTING YOUR WORK... ME... EVERYTHING! YOU'VE BEEN SEEING THAT PALLID CHURCHMOUSE...
WELL, I WON'T STAND FOR IT, NICHOLAS! YOU'RE GOING TO BREAK IT OFF! NOW! TONIGHT!
I'M SORRY, FATHER! I LOVE IRIS! YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM SEEING HER OR LOVING HER, OR MARRYING HER!
MARRYING HER!?... GASP... IS THAT IN YOUR MIND?! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR SENSES?! YOU! A BULLARD! MARRYING THAT...THAT SNIP OF A NOTHING! I...I FORBID YOU TO SEE HER! I'LL CUT YOU OFF WITHOUT A PENNY! I'LL...
DO WHAT YOU LIKE, FATHER! I DON'T NEED YOUR MONEY! I DON'T NEED ANYTHING EXCEPT TO GET AWAY FROM YOU...AND THIS HOUSE!
THE FOLLOWING DAY, AT THE LABORATORY...
THAT'S RIGHT!, I WANT YOU TO SEND HIM ON A YEAR'S ASSIGNMENT TO ANY PART OF THE GLOBE YOU CHOOSE ... PROVIDED IT'S AT LEAST 3000 MILES FROM BOSTON! THAT'S A COMMAND, JOHNSON...
A COMMAND, EH? WELL... AS CHIEF STOCKHOLDER IN THIS COMPANY, YOU'RE ENTITLED TO COMMAND...
...AND AS A MERE EMPLOYEE OF THIS FIRM, IT'S MY JOB TO OBEY! BUT I'VE WATCHED NICHOLAS! I KNOW HIS NATURE AND ABILITY! IF YOU'RE TRYING TO CUT NICKY TO FIT YOUR PATTERN G.C., YOU'LL FAIL!
THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, JOHNSON...
NICKY IS GENTLE...POETIC... IMAGINATIVE! IF YOU TRY TO CHANGE HIM, YOU'LL DISFIGURE HIM... DESTROY HIM!
THEN LET HIM BE DESTROYED! IF HE'S NOT A BULLARD, HE'S A NOTHING. CARRY OUT MY ORDERS!
4

TWO DAYS LATER...

JOHNSON FINALLY ADMITTED THAT IT WAS *YOUR* IDEA TO ASSIGN ME TO THE NEW GUINEA LAB! IS *THAT* YOUR PLAN... TO *SEPARATE* ME FROM *IRIS*?

IT *IS*! I FIGURE YOU'LL COME TO YOUR *SENSES* 5000 MILES FROM MISS NOBODY! YOU'LL UNDERSTAND THAT I *DID* THIS FOR YOUR *OWN GOOD*!

AND *YOU'LL* UNDERSTAND THAT I *HATE* YOU FOR IT! *ALL RIGHT*! I'LL GO! BUT, WHAT ON EARTH WILL *YOU* GET OUT OF THIS? A SON WHO *DESPISES YOU* FOR YOUR *TYRANNY*?!

DESPISE ME ALL YOU *LIKE*... AS LONG AS YOU CARRY ON THE *BULLARD TRADITION*! HERE'S TO YOUR YEAR IN NEW GUINEA...

...AND SO, SHORTLY...

IT SHOULDN'T TAKE MORE THAN A *YEAR* TO MAKE HIM FORGET HER! I...I COULDN'T *STAND* A *LONGER* SEPARATION! MY...MY *SON* IS ALL I *HAVE* IN THE WORLD, JOHNSON! I SHALL BE *TERRIBLY LONELY* WITHOUT HIM! BUT...I'M *DOING* THIS BECAUSE I *LOVE* HIM...

YOU'RE IN A *STRANGE* LOVE, MR. BULLARD!

THE MONTHS CREPT BY. GERARD BULLARD REMAINED CLOSETED WITH THE PAST, ALONE IN HIS LUXURIOUS BOSTON MANSION...

WHAT *IS* IT? WHERE HAVE I GONE *WRONG*? EVERY LETTER I'VE WRITTEN TO NICKY HAS GONE *UNANSWERED*. DOESN'T HE REALIZE HOW *LONELY* I AM? HOW MUCH I *MISS* HIM? WHAT *ELSE* HAVE I GOT IN THE WORLD EXCEPT MY SON?

YOU *RANG*, MR. BULLARD?

YES, CHESTER. POST THIS LETTER, WILL YOU? IT MAY NOT BE *ANSWERED*, LIKE THE *OTHERS*, BUT ONE MUST *TRY*, MUSTN'T ONE?! BESIDES, *WRITING* TO MY SON BRINGS HIM *CLOSER* TO ME, SOMEHOW...

MORE MONTHS CRAWLED BY, WITH NO WORD FROM NICHOLAS. FINALLY, GERARD BULLARD WENT TO THE LABORATORY...

SORRY, MR. BULLARD! ALL *WE* RECEIVE FROM YOUR SON ARE HIS *REPORTS*! DIDN'T YOU *EXPECT* THIS SILENCE? HAS NICKY ANY REASON TO BE *GRATEFUL* TO YOU?

NO! I *SEE* THAT NOW! AND I HAVE NOTHING *THIS* WAY! NOT A *BULLARD*! NOT A *SON*! AT LEAST, IF I'D LET HIM DO AS HE *PLEASED*, I'D HAVE HIM *NEAR* ME!

FINALLY, AFTER THREE MORE INTERMINABLE MONTHS...

JOHNSON, I CAN'T *STAND* IT ANY LONGER! *ORDER MY SON HOME! CANCEL HIS ASSIGNMENT TO RABAUL!* I CAN'T *TAKE* THIS TERRIBLE LONELINESS! MY LIFE IS *EMPTY...WORTHLESS... MISERABLE!*

I WON'T *HAVE* TO, G.C.! I RECEIVED THIS *CABLE* THIS MORNING! *HE'S ON HIS WAY!*

THANK HEAVENS! IT...*CHOKE*...IT'S AN ANSWER TO MY *PRAYERS!* I'M GOING TO *MEND MY WAYS*, JOHNSON! I'VE BEEN *TOO STRICT...TOO DOMINEERING!* FROM NOW ON, NICHOLAS CAN DO AS HE *PLEASES!* I WON'T *STOP* HIM!

SO G.C BULLARD WENT HOME TO HIS LONELY MANSION TO AWAIT HIS SON'S RETURN. ONE NIGHT, ABOUT A MONTH LATER, A RARE SOUND FILLED THE BULLARD HOUSE, THE SOUND OF A DOORBELL. THE FOOTFALL OF ANOTHER HUMAN BEING BESIDE CHESTER AND HIMSELF. BULLARD STOOD UP...TREMBLING WITH EAGERNESS. THEN...

Y-YOU!?...*GASP*... WHAT ARE *YOU* D-DOING HERE?!

I JUST ARRIVED FROM RABAUL! YOU DIDN'T *KNOW* THAT, *DID* YOU, MR. BULLARD? YOU DIDN'T *KNOW* THAT NICKY *SENT* FOR ME...THAT WE WERE *MARRIED*, ALMOST A *YEAR* AGO!

B- BUT, *NICHOLAS!* WHERE'S *NICHOLAS* HE CABLED THAT HE...

HE WAS *SICK* WHEN HE SENT THAT CABLE, MR. BULLARD! *TERRIBLY* SICK! THE CLIMATE WAS *BAD* FOR NICKY! HE'D CONTRACTED A RARE TROPICAL *DISEASE!* NICKY'S *DEAD*, MR. BULLARD! HE *DIED ON SHIPBOARD...ON THE WAY HOME!* YOUR SON IS *DEAD!*

D-*DEAD*?! NICKY.. *DEAD*?! NO! I.. I CAN'T.. THAT *CHILD* YOU'RE CARRYING!? IS *THAT*..?

YES, MR. BULLARD! HE'S YOUR *GRAND-SON!* HE'S THE *ONLY* HAPPINESS NICKY AND I *KNEW* IN THAT *GOD-FORSAKEN* PLACE!

THEN EVERYTHING IS NOT *LOST!* THE CHILD IS A *BULLARD!* HE MUST LIVE *HERE!* SO MUST *YOU!* I'M... A *WEALTHY* MAN! I CAN GIVE YOU AND THE CHILD *EVERY COMFORT!* I...

NO! DON'T *TOUCH* HIM! YOU *KILLED* NICKY WITH YOUR TYRANNY, BUT YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO DESTROY NICKY'S *SON!* YOU'LL NEVER SEE YOUR GRANDSON *AGAIN! GOODBYE*, MR. BULLARD!

BULLARDS SENSES REELED! FAR AWAY HE HEARD A DOOR SLAM... THE MUFFLED SOUND OF A TAXI DRIVING OFF. HE STOOD THERE...TREMBLING IN HORROR AND LONELINESS...

NO! *COME BACK! NO! PLEASE...*

BUT ALL THAT CAME BACK TO G.C. BULLARD WAS A HOLLOW ECHO...

-THE END-

LAST ACT

Lindstrom listened, smiling, while the old chief—Luana—spoke to the men who had come ashore from the schooner. Lindstrom was happy. At last, he could leave this cursed South Pacific island—with his pearls. He said nothing when Luana told how he, Lindstrom, had been washed ashore after his ship was wrecked. He said nothing when the old man told how Lindstrom had behaved. Like a madman. How he had used his giant's body to bully the peaceful islanders, how he had forced them to dive for pearls in the lagoon—and to die from the sharks and the pressure.

"But," the old man concluded, "the Lindstrom is not to blame. He is mad."

Inwardly Lindstrom grinned. These natives thought the man to be the chosen of the gods—and so he had pretended. For a year he had played the madman—and taken the islanders' food, their pearls . . .

"It's the old man who's insane," he said. "Do I look crazy?"

The men from the schooner stared. Lindstrom's beard was wild. He wore only a loincloth and a little canvas sack on a thong about his neck.

" Well?" Lindstrom stirred uneasily. Surely the fools couldn't think he really was insane. And yet—he saw how they moved, how they spread out warily. "No! Don't believe him—"

Too late! Hands clutched at him. Lindstrom fought. Like a madman! But it was hopeless. He was borne down, held. This could not be happening! There was a fortune in pearls in the sack at his throat! They couldn't really think him mad! They'd take him home—to a madhouse! They—

"Wait! Listen to me! I can prove that I'm not insane!"

There was no way to prove it. But Lindstrom wanted only time. Time to think, to find a way out.

The pearls!

Lindstrom fumbled with the sack at his throat. "Please! It's all true! Everything the old man said! But I was only acting! You don't have to—to take me home in irons! I'll pay you! A fortune! I've got pearls! You won't regret it!"

Lindstrom was almost blubbering when he spilled the contents of the sack into his palm.

"You see?" said Luana. "Mad."

Lindstrom tried again to struggle, then. But it was hopeless. He was bound, carried to the small boat, rowed out to the schooner. Later, there would be a cell in an asylum . . .

Luana could smile, at the thought of that. He stood on the beach, watching the schooner sail away, with his people. The people whom Lindstrom had beaten and driven to their deaths. The people who would never have believed, as Luana had always believed, that Lindstrom was pretending. It was just and right that it should end this way.

From the sand, Luana picked up the canvas sack which Lindstrom had dropped. The men from the schooner had had no choice of thought, really. Luana had seen to that.

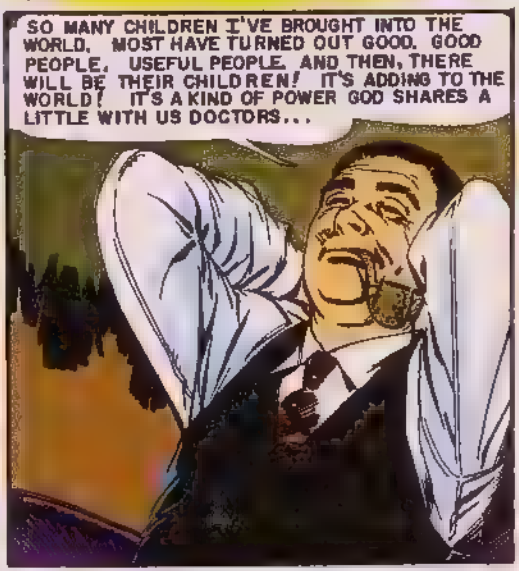
Slowly, Luana poured the contents of the sack into his hand. There were still some stones left in it. The smooth, round pebbles which he had substituted for the pearls in the sack last night, while Lindstrom slept, when the schooner had first appeared offshore. Yes, it was just and right that it should end this way.

COUNTRY DOCTOR

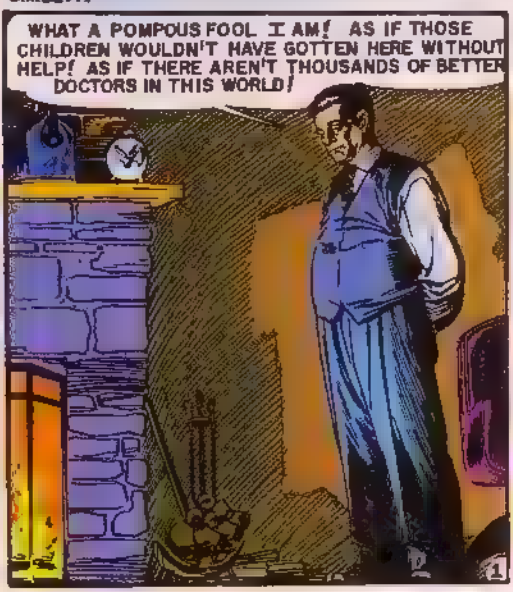
IT IS COLD THIS LATE FEBRUARY NIGHT. IT HAS SNOWED ALL DAY, AND, OUTSIDE, THE COUNTRYSIDE LIES UNDER A VAST MANTLE OF WHITE. FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, DOCTOR JOSEPH BROWN, YOU SIT AT YOUR SCARRED AND ANCIENT DESK, WARMED NOT BY THE BRIGHT CRACKLING FIRE IN YOUR OFFICE HEARTH, AND NOT BY WHAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED, BUT RATHER BY WHAT YOU HAVE GIVEN. YES, YOU'RE A POOR MAN, DR. BROWN, IF ONE WERE TO MEASURE YOUR WORTH IN TERMS OF YOUR BANK ACCOUNT. YOU'RE POOR, EXCEPT ON AGE-YELLOWED PAPER. FOR WHO, IN THIS AREA YOU SERVE, DOES NOT OWE YOU MONEY... AND MORE? HOW MANY OWE YOU THEIR VERY LIVES? YET, IT IS NOT WITH REGRET THAT YOU FINGER THROUGH THOSE UNPAID BILLS FOR MEDICAL SERVICES RENDERED. YOU ARE COUNTING YOUR BLESSINGS, DR. BROWN...

IT...IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE... BUT HERE IT IS! I BROUGHT ELLIOT EDWARDS INTO THE WORLD THIRTY-SIX YEARS AGO! THEY WERE POOR, THE EDWARDS! AND NOW, ELLIOT'S MADE OUT SO WELL...SUCH AN IMPORTANT MAN!

YOU LEAN BACK IN YOUR WORN AND CRACKED LEATHER CHAIR, DR. BROWN... AND YOU CONTEMPLATE YOUR ILLIMITABLE WEALTH...


SO MANY CHILDREN I'VE BROUGHT INTO THE WORLD. MOST HAVE TURNED OUT GOOD. GOOD PEOPLE. USEFUL PEOPLE. AND THEN, THERE WILL BE THEIR CHILDREN! IT'S ADDING TO THE WORLD! IT'S A KIND OF POWER GOD SHARES A LITTLE WITH US DOCTORS...

THEN, RISING SUDDENLY FROM YOUR CHAIR, YOU CROSS YOUR OFFICE TO THE FIREPLACE, AND THE FLAMES' GOLDEN GLOW HEIGHTENS YOUR WRY SMILE...


WHAT A POMPOUS FOOL I AM! AS IF THOSE CHILDREN WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN HERE WITHOUT HELP! AS IF THERE AREN'T THOUSANDS OF BETTER DOCTORS IN THIS WORLD!
1

GEORGE EVANS

YOU GLANCE AT YOUR WATCH...

ALMOST MIDNIGHT! INSTEAD OF SITTING UP LIKE AN IDIOT AND THINKING ABOUT WHAT A GLORIOUS MARTYR I AM, I OUGHT TO BE ASLEEP! OH, FOR ONE FULL NIGHT IN A GOOD WARM BED...WITH NO PHONE CALLS AT TWO A.M. TO COME SOOTHE AN ACHING STOMACH!

R-R-RRRRRRRRRG!

EVEN BEFORE YOU CAN FINISH SAVORING THE THOUGHT OF A FULL NIGHT'S REST, IT COMES... THE SHRILL, SHARP RING...

HELLO! YES, EMMA! EMMA, PLEASE TRY TO BE CALM! I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING! WHAT?! WHO!?

EDDIE! IT'S EDDIE'S LEG? IT'S SMASHED! OH, LORD! IT'S BLEEDING SO MUCH! YOU'VE GOT TO COME RIGHT AWAY! IT'S SMASHED, DOCTOR...

PUT YOUR BOY ON, EMMA! YES.. CHET! YES! IS HE THERE? GOOD! LET ME TALK TO HIM! HELLO ..CHET? LISTEN. TELL ME EXACTLY WHERE IT'S BLEEDING AND I'LL TELL YOU HOW TO APPLY A TOURNIQUET TILL I CAN GET THERE...

YOU INSTRUCT THE BOY AND HANG UP. YOU HURRIEDLY DRESS TO GO OUT. BUT BEFORE YOU CAN LEAVE...

RRRRRRRRRG!

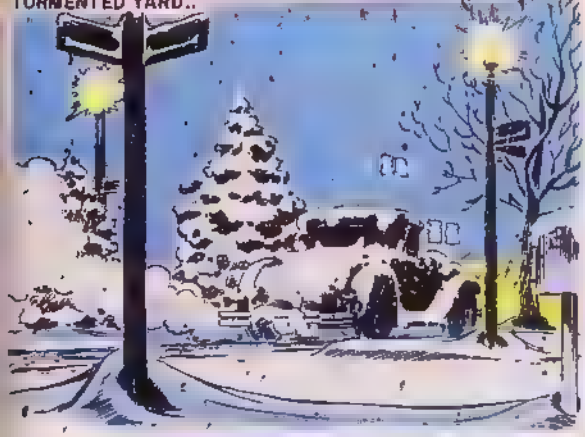
HELLO! YES, FRED! YES, I'LL COME! DON'T WORRY! THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF BABIES BORN EVERY DAY! ALL RIGHT, FRED! I'LL BE THERE IN HALF AN HOUR...

THEN YOU STEP INTO THE BITTER NIGHT, BLACK BAG IN HAND. YOU TRUDGE UP THE SNOW-COVERED WALK TO YOUR MODEL-A ...

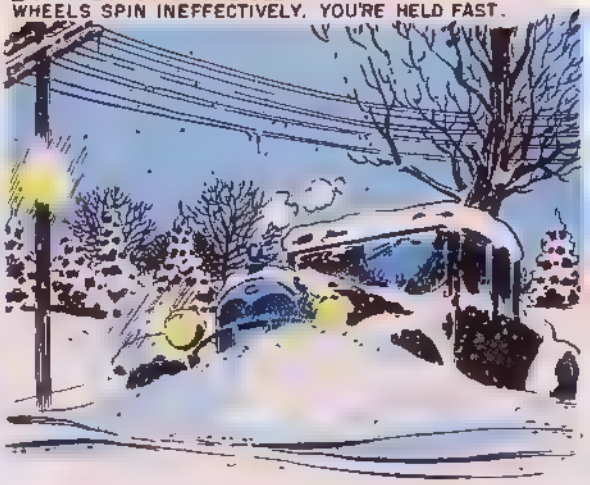
HALF AN HOUR, I TOLD FRED! I FORGOT ABOUT THE SNOW. I'LL BE LUCKY IF I GET TO THE KELLER'S BY THEN...

YOU SQUEEZE IN BEHIND THE WHEEL, PULL OUT THE CHOKE, PUMP THE ACCELERATOR A FEW TIMES, AND PRAY. THE STARTER WHINES COMPLAININGLY. THE MOTOR TURNS OVER, COUGHS, AND DIES. YOU TRY AGAIN...ONCE...TWICE. IT CATCHES! YOU RACE THE MOTOR TO WARM IT UP. YOUR SNOW TIRES SKID, THEN GRIP, AND THE CAR LURCHES FORWARD

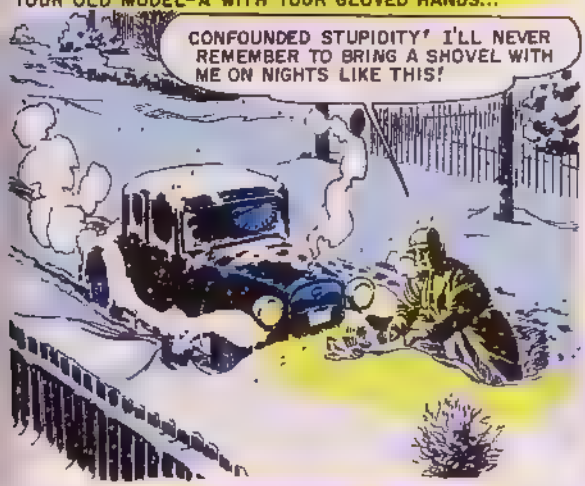
You're on your way. But the going is tough, especially at crossroads, where there are no drift fences to keep the snow from piling up. At first, it's hub-cap deep, and you make it slowly, yard by tormented yard..



But then you strike deep into a drift and the wheels spin ineffectively. You're held fast.



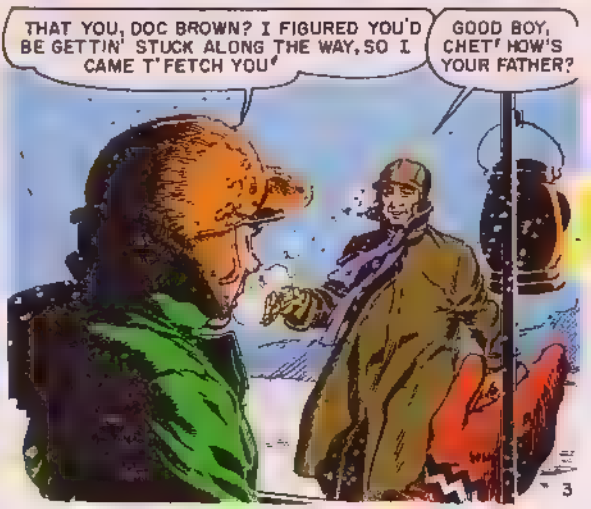
You come out, wading through the powdery soft white fluff. You try to clear the way in front of your old model-A with your gloved hands...



You've cleared but a few feet, and the cold has bitten through your gloves. You get behind the wheel once more, hoping to charge clear of the drift. But your tires only sing against the snow, packed solid beneath them...

Each step through waist-high billows is agonizing labor. But you're needed, Doctor Brown! So you push on on, until you see it coming toward you a lantern that first appears to float, apparition-like, above the snow. And then you hear the silvery tinkling of bells in the clear night air.

Then, a voice calls your name...



YOUR MEDICAL BAG IN HAND, YOU CLAMBER ONTO THE SEAT BESIDE YOUNG CHET KELLER. HE CRACKS HIS WHIP, PULLS ONE REIN, AND HIS HORSE BRINGS THE SLEIGH AROUND FACING TOWARDS HOME...

PA'S ALL RIGHT ENOUGH, I GUESS. I TOLD MA TO LOOSEN THE TOURN'QUET EVERY SO OFTEN, LIKE YOU TOLD ME. AT FIRST, PA SAID HIS LEG DIDN'T HURT 'CAUSE IT WAS NUMB, BUT IT STARTED GETTIN' FEELIN' BACK, AND IT HURTS HIM PLENTY NOW!

YOU'RE SOOTHED BY THE HISSING OF THE RUNNERS, AND BY KNOWING YOU WON'T HAVE TO WALK. WHEN THE SLEIGH REACHES THE KELLER PLACE, YOU HURRY IN...

CAN YOU GIVE HIM SOMETHING QUICK, DR. BROWN? SOMETHING TO STOP THE PAIN? I CAN'T STAND EDDIE SUFFERING LIKE THIS!

YOU'VE GOT TO GET HOLD OF YOURSELF, EMMA! I'LL NEED YOUR HELP. PUT SOME WATER ON TO BOIL...

EDDIE KELLER'S LEG IS BADLY MANGLED, AND YOU KNOW THAT YOU WON'T BE LEAVING THERE IN THE NEXT HALF-HOUR OR FOR HOURS AFTER THAT. YOU LOOK INTO HIS EYES THAT BEG FOR RELIEF FROM AGONY, AND HURRIEDLY, YOU INJECT MORPHINE...

IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT IN A MINUTE, EDDIE!

IT...IT WAS THE...THE TRACTOR...*GASP*... TRIED TO CLEAR A...PATH TO THE ROAD, DOC... TURNED OVER IN A DITCH...

DOC! AM...AM I GONNA LOSE IT? MY LEG?

I DON'T THINK SO, EDDIE! I THINK WE CAN SAVE IT!

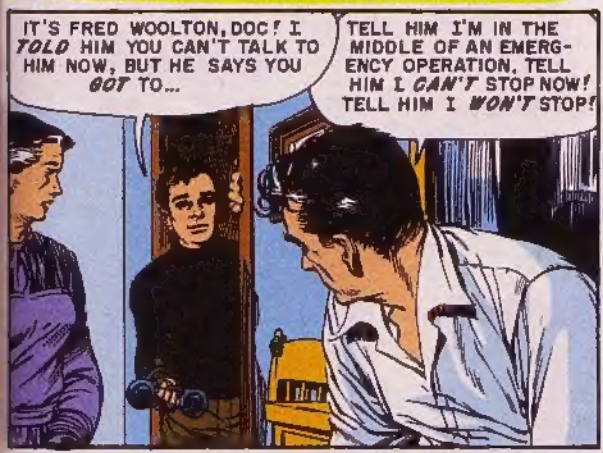
YOU TREAT THE PATIENT TO PREVENT SHOCK... THEN READY HIM FOR EMERGENCY SURGERY. NO HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT. NO TRAINED NURSE. ONLY WHAT INSTRUMENTS YOU'VE BROUGHT. ONLY A TREMBLING, FRIGHTENED WOMAN TO HELP...

HOLD THE CLOTH STEADY, EMMA! NOW, EDDIE, I'M GOING TO PUT YOU TO SLEEP. BREATHE DEEP, EDDIE...BREATHE...

YOU WORK CALMLY, DOCTOR BROWN...CAREFULLY. AND YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ABOUT FRED'S WORRIED CALL ABOUT ALICE'S BABY COMING...

I... I CAN'T BE IN TWO PLACES AT THE SAME TIME! EDDIE'S LEG CAN'T WAIT, BUT THE BABY CAN GET HERE WITHOUT MY HELP IF IT'S IN *THAT* BIG A HURRY!

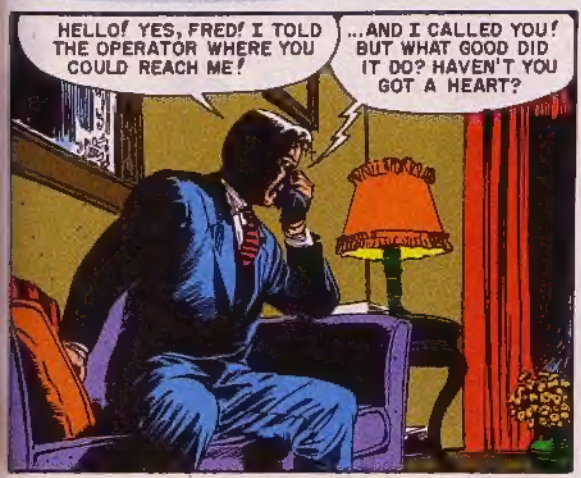
AND INTO YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS FILTERS THE AWARENESS OF A TELEPHONE RINGING. YET SO DEEP IS YOUR CONCENTRATION UPON YOUR MERCIFUL WORK, THAT YOUNG CHET KELLER MUST CALL YOU TWICE BEFORE YOU HEAR HIM...


IT'S FRED WOOLTON, DOC! I *TOLD* HIM YOU CAN'T TALK TO HIM NOW, BUT HE SAYS YOU *GOT* TO...
TELL HIM I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF AN EMERGENCY OPERATION. TELL HIM I *CAN'T* STOP NOW! TELL HIM I *WON'T* STOP!

AT THE END OF ANOTHER HOUR, YOU DROP YOUR WEARY ARMS. YOUR WORK IS DONE...

I'M GOING TO WAIT AROUND A LITTLE WHILE, EMMA. I WANT TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. YOU'D BETTER GET SOME SLEEP!
I CAN'T LEAVE HIM, DOCTOR! I'LL REST IN THIS CHAIR...

YOU WAIT IN THE PARLOR. EXHAUSTED, YOU DOZE ON THE SOFA. BUT NOT FOR LONG. THE PHONE RINGS WITH AN URGENCY YOU CAN SENSE...



YOU TELL THE ANGUISHED HUSBAND YOU'RE STARTING RIGHT OUT, AND YOU HANG UP. EDDIE KELLER IS STILL ASLEEP, BUT NOT HIS WIFE...

YOU KNOW WHAT EDDIE'S BEING ALL RIGHT MEANS TO US, DOCTOR! HOW CAN WE EVER THANK YOU?!
NO NEED, EMMA! I'LL NEED CHET TO DRIVE ME TO MY NEXT CALL. I'LL STOP BY LATER TO SEE HOW EDDIE'S COMING ALONG...

YOU CLIMB INTO THE SLEIGH AND CHET CRACKS THE WHIP. BUT IT'S SLOW GOING NOW THROUGH THE HEAVY DRIFTS...

CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING TO MAKE THE HORSE HURRY, SON?
I'M TRYING TO, DOC! THE SNOW'S TOO DEEP NOW FOR 'IM TO TROT! AND IT'S SOFT! NO CRUST! IT'S HOLDIN' BACK THE SLEIGH!

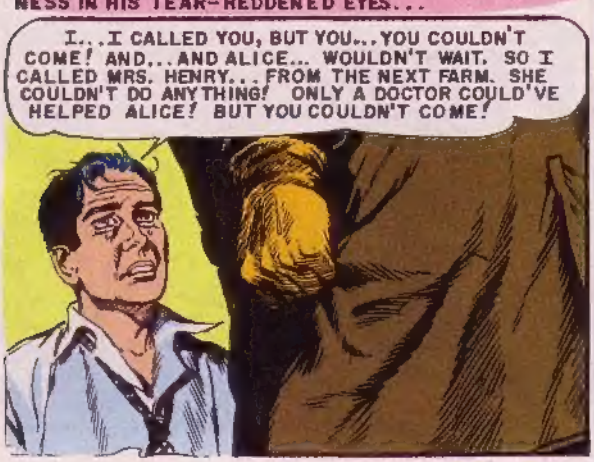
EACH DRAGGING MILE TO THE WOOLTON HOME FINDS YOUR MIND MORE TORTURED. IN YOUR THOUGHTS, YOU SEE FRED PACING ANXIOUSLY. . .THE ENDLESS WAITING. YOU SEE ALICE...PRETTY, YOUNG, SWEET ALICE...

IT'S FULL DAYLIGHT WHEN YOU ARRIVE. YOU LEAP FROM THE SLEIGH...

YOU REACH THE PORCH... THE DOOR... TURN THE KNOB. IT'S OPEN. YOU ENTER...

FRED WOOLTON DOESN'T ANSWER. FILLED WITH APPREHENSION, YOU MOVE INTO THE PARLOR. YOU SEE HIM THERE, SITTING MOTIONLESS, PALE, STARING BLANKLY AHEAD...

FRED IS SUDDENLY AWARE OF YOUR PRESENCE. HE LOOKS UP AT YOU. HIS VOICE IS ACCUSING, BUT HIS DRAWN FACE SHOWS NO BITTERNESS...ONLY HELPLESSNESS IN HIS TEAR-REDDENED EYES...


I...I CALLED YOU, BUT YOU...YOU COULDN'T COME! AND...AND ALICE... WOULDN'T WAIT. SO I CALLED MRS. HENRY... FROM THE NEXT FARM. SHE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING! ONLY A DOCTOR COULD'VE HELPED ALICE! BUT YOU COULDN'T COME!

YOU COULDN'T COME... AND NOW YOU'RE HERE...AND IT'S TOO LATE! ALICE IS DEAD! THE BABY IS DEAD! I CALLED YOU FOR HELP, BUT YOU COULDN'T COME! NOW THEY'RE... SOB... DEAD! SOB... SOB...

A WORLD SCREAMS IN ANGUISH AND SIGHS AND DIES IN YOUR HEART, DOCTOR BROWN. A COLD NUMBNESS GRIPS YOUR WHOLE BEING AND YOU HAVE THE SENSATION OF FLOATING, RATHER THAN WALKING, INTO ALICE'S BEDROOM. YOU SEE THE RAVAGES OF AGONY STILL ETCHED ON HER ONCE-PRETTY FACE, AND YOU KNOW AT A GLANCE THAT SHE IS DEAD...

THEN, ACHING DEEP INSIDE, YOU RETURN TO THE PARLOR. YOU TRY TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS TO FRED, BUT HE REGARDS YOU WITH THE HURT EXPRESSION OF A BETRAYED CHILD. YOUR LIPS ARE DRY. YOUR TONGUE IS THICK. YOUR WORDS HAVE NO SOUND. YOU CLOSE THE FRONT DOOR BEHIND YOU AND STEP INTO THE COLD MORNING...

YOUR SHOULDERS SAG AND YOUR FACE IS ASHEN. YOUR INNER WARMTH... YOUR SENSE OF WELL-BEING HAS GIVEN WAY TO A CLAMMY EMPTINESS. CHET WATCHES IN SILENCE AS YOU TAKE YOUR PLACE BESIDE HIM IN THE SLEIGH...

THERE IS A PINK GLOW OF SUNLIGHT ON THE VIRGIN SNOW-DRIFTS... THE MUFFLED CLIP-CLOP OF THE HORSE'S HOOF-BEATS... A THOUSAND SIGHTS AND A THOUSAND SOUNDS ALICE WILL NEVER KNOW AGAIN. AND SUDDENLY... YOU'RE GRIPPED BY AN OVERWHELMING GRIEF...

THERE'S DISBELIEF IN CHET'S VOICE... AN UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT...

YOU NOD. YOU SWALLOW HARD, AND THE TEARS BRIMMING YOUR EYES FLOW UNCHECKED DOWN YOUR CHEEK. THEN, AT LAST, AS YOU RIDE THROUGH THE BRIGHT FAMILIAR COUNTRYSIDE, YOUR WORDS FIND VOICE...